DEVELOPING A FACULTY-LIBRARY

COLLABORATION MODEL

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Abstract

The emphasis for lifelong learning and associated graduate capabilities is leading to opportunities for new collaborative practices between lecturers and librarians. Lecturers bring expertise in their disciplines, knowledge of the content to be taught and of course assessment and teaching and learning skills. Librarians support to build up information skills and finds out methods to integrate them into the course. In this role, librarians encourage, support and nudge faculty in the establishment of learning priorities which ensure that students develop the abilities that will allow them to be effective lifelong learners in this ever-changing and increasingly prevalent digital world. The output of universities should fit the available academic careers and into the workforce. This urges the requirement of faculty- library collaboration.

In this study 'Faculty-Library Collaboration' is defined as librarians and teaching faculty work together to integrate information to enhance student learning. The attributes of causes and effects of faculty-library collaboration are discussed. Mainly the causes are categorized as membership, knowledge & skills and resources. The effects are categorized as teaching and learning, research

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and library resources and services. Based on the extensive literature review and some strategies used by the university libraries in other countries a conceptual model on faculty-library collaboration will be presented.

Keywords: faculty-library collaboration, causes & effects of collaboration, models on collaboration

1. Introduction

Over the last decade, there has been a huge expansion of information and this trend is continuing exponentially. Therefore, handling such information effectively is paramount

importance. Effective use of information will generate life-long learners and critical thinkers. Rapid change of tools, resources and interrelationship of information have given rise to a need

for a life-long learning. Higher education institutes including universities should pay due attention to this and endeavour to find new avenues of achieving this goal. In this paper, faculty- library collaboration is discussed as a new avenue and an effective model will be proposed for institutionalizing faculty-library collaboration in the universities.

2. Collaboration

Collaborators work towards a common goal. The collaborative process is based on collective creation, and it is sharing and transformation of information into knowledge and products (Agada, 1998). According to Baggs (2008), collaboration is both a process and an outcome. Faculty-library collaboration in the academic university environment is the process in which librarians and lecturers working together to integrate information in order to enhance student learning. Collaboration has a very close relationship with the academic libraries and it brings new energy and relevance to the library. Schrage (1990) defines collaboration as a process of shared creation. Collaboration creates a shared

meaning about a process, a product or an event. Collaboration can occur by mail, over the phone lines, and in person. But the true medium of collaboration is people.

In the academic literature, collaboration is widely used to refer situations in which two or more people work together to accomplish a task. The term collaboration is frequently used synonymously with terms such as networking, coordination, corporation, partnership, relationship and alliance. When consulting past studies and related literature, it is clear that the meaning of collaboration differs from the other terms used synonymously with collaboration. It differs qualitatively in terms of interpersonal process and quantitatively in terms of goals, methods and outcomes.

3. Benefits of faculty-library collaboration

The huge expansion of the information universe and the complexity of it make it impossible for individuals to acquire all of the relevant interdisciplinary subject content and skills. The immediacy of information access for all the communities of the universities has also become a dire necessity. These factors will drive librarians and lecturers towards collaboration. The present education system is focused on life-long learning as an outcome. Students' needs are complicated in the process of achieving this. Those needs cannot be fulfilled in isolation (Fliss, 2005). The emphasis for lifelong learning and associated graduate capabilities is leading to opportunities for new collaborative practices between lecturers and librarians.

There is a greater demand for instructional accountability. This will pressurize the librarians and university teachers to explore alternative and more effective ways of teaching and learning. This is possible only through collaborative practices. Similarly, there is an expanding responsibility by the teaching faculty for direct instruction drawn from outside the ranks of traditional teaching faculty such as librarians, student affairs educators and other academic professionals (Rhoades, 2000).

existing theory and actual practice. The objective of developing a faculty-library collaboration model is to address these issues.

4. Collaborative activities

When emphasizing on the faculty-library collaboration, it can happen in the forms of instructional teams (Rader, 1998), institutional teams (Loehr, 2006), working on individual projects (Cooper & Gardner, 2001), consultancy (Donham, 2004), varied and increased use of resources (McGuiness, 2006), training (Creamer, 2003) and develop shared understandings (Bruce, 2001). Little literature exists on how librarians and teaching faculty can collaborate to support curricular or pedagogical methods for improving the performance by students in critical thinking about the research process (Borden and Perkins, 1999).

A survey carried out by Gallegos and Wright (2000) in 1998, shows that approximately 60% of the faculty- library collaboration projects are on instructional collaboration. The remaining 40% of projects included collection building, web page design, curricular revision, faculty staff development, grant writing, publications and conference presentations. These survey results are based only from the United States, Australia and Canada.

In addition, participating in university committees, developing assignments, developing a course syllabus, team teaching with lecturers, guest lecturing, demonstrating certain techniques to the course and co-sponsoring conferences can also be considered as collaborative endeavors in the universities. Lindstrom and Shonrock (2006) suggest few activities which could be carried out collaboratively. One such method is integrating information literacy into specific courses. This may achieve with Freshman Interest Groups, lined or paired courses or by hybrid models. The other method is embarking campus-wide information-literacy programs. As stated earlier, many of the endeavors of faculty-library collaboration are on integrating information literacy to academic programs (Loehr, 2006).

A study carried out at University of Pittsburgh on "Library Research Project for First-Year Engineering Students" is another example for collaborative practices between academics and librarians (Callison, 2005). This collaboration has resulted in a library research project that is integrated into the freshmen curriculum. The goal for the library is to introduce research as a necessary set of skills for successful engineers. Oberman (2002) identified "librarians collaboration with classroom faculty" as one of the "Best Practices" in the "Best Practices Initiative: Characteristics of Programs of Information Literacy that Illustrate Best Practices" project carried out by the Association of College & Research Libraries' Institution for Information Literacy.

The collaboration among librarians and the academics can result great achievements. Bazillion and Braun (2001) state that the librarians are supportive in creating of web-enhanced courses. Librarians are expertise in web page design, identification of appropriate resources and teaching electronic information and research skills. When looking back the involvement of academics in library programs, the College of Charleston reports a book selection process which academics were involved (Neville, 1998). The library had a flexible process to check the level of faculty involvement by faculty wise. The maximum participation was reported from the English faculty whereas the minimal participation was from the Computer Science Faculty.

5. Factors that support faculty-library collaboration

The factors that support collaboration are described lengthily in the literature. When consulting this literature, it is found that the same concept is discussed under different topics of factors. A thorough analysis of literature tries to bring a categorization of those supporting factors into 3 main groups in this study. They are membership, knowledge and skills and resources.

The factors which address the personal traits of the partners in the collaboration process are discussed under membership category. In the process of faculty-library collaboration the partners involved are the librarians and the lecturers.

Collaboration has a very close relationship with the faculties and libraries in universities. Mutual relationships are very important for successful collaboration. Collaborators need better skills in listening, communicating and facilitating groups. Those skills are the talents that build strong relationships. All those who are engaged with the collaborative endeavor need to have positive attitudes towards collaboration. It will bring positive thinking of collaboration and admiration of collaboration.

Mutual respect will create a context which allows collaborators to shape ideas, modify them by listening to peers, question, express doubts, and jointly design and implement plans. Trust in the collaborative process is the state that each member of the group believes that other members in the group are good, sincere, honest and would not harm.

The processes and the skills and knowledge which help to initiate and maintain the collaborative process are described under knowledge and skills section. The faculty-library collaborative process is based on joint creation, sharing and transformation of information into a mix of knowledge and products. Collaborators should have competency on initiating and maintaining a successful collaborative endeavors. Ivey (2003) identifies ongoing communication is essential for a successful collaboration. This ongoing communication need to be reasonably open (Schrage, 1990). Communicating should be done in a professional way (Holtz, 2001). It is needed to keep informed the other partners of the collaborative process, but at the same time need to avoid inundating the partners with constant messages. Collaboration needs skills of listening. Past research reveal that the majority of librarians and lecturers are introverts (Raspa & Ward, 2000). It is needed to improve this ability of listening each other which is an important requirement for collaboration. The most important thing is that librarians and lecturers need to be good listeners in attaining successful collaboration.

The resources that need for successful collaboration including the environmental factors, organizational set up are given emphasize under

resources. The university which expects to embark faculty-library collaboration activities needs to have adequate staffing in fostering a successful collaboration practice (Ivey, 2003). It is not only the librarians and the lecturers who engaged in the collaborative activities, but also support staff such as clerical and computer units.

The benefits of collaboration will be seen after a considerable time of the collaborative process. It can be of few years. Time is an important resource for a successful collaborative endeavor. The success of a faculty-library collaborative effort depends on the size and type of the university. Boswell (2008) identifies three important characteristics of successful collaboration; networking, leadership and visioning. Networking will enable one to draw upon multiple resources to build a team to accomplish the desired objectives. This way librarians and lecturers can identify both human and financial resources that are available for the collaborative activities. Leadership is another important element of collaborative endeavors. Leaders need to remain visible, enthusiastic and actively involved with the goals of the organization. Every member of the group must work towards a vision to reap success in a collaborative project. According to Boswell (2008), "a shared vision held by all partners is an essential early step in the partnering process". Bruffe (1993) identifies that several elements, including group size, heterogeneity or homogeneity, ethnicity, work phases have a direct influence on the collaborative activities to successful or unsuccessful. Good collaboration involves right blend of planning and teamwork.

Holtz (2001) identified 50 ways that librarians could reach the teaching faculty in order to develop and enhance the collaborative practices. The areas that given emphasize are:

(1) Meeting the faculty

Holtz suggests inviting lecturers for appropriate meetings and librarians to attend faculty meetings. Further, it is important to advertise the library services and resources in the university publications.

(2) Building a relationship

Building a good relationship is vital. Answering requests and complaints in timely manner will help to build a strong relationship with the lecturers.

(3) Communicating professionally

Preparing a "Guide to the Libraries" is very useful. If the lecturers are informed about the new acquisitions and available funds to their respective departments, they can request the library material needed for their subject areas.

(4) Position the library

Applying grants will raise funds to the library as well as the positive attention towards the library within the university. Success stories of the library must be disseminated among the campus community. Librarians can be volunteers for campus-wide projects. It is important to advertise the library's mission statement and to show how librarians are living up to it.

(5) Know your stuff

Professional development is equally needed for librarians. Obtaining an advanced degree in a subject specific field will open up many avenues. It is a good opportunity if librarians can get whole or a part of a module to teach. If such an opportunity is given, it is necessary to prepare thoroughly and perform a better job in order to get more opportunities.

(6) Tailoring to faculty interests

Individual faculty syllabus can be used as a collection development tool. Librarians can provide individualized research assistance to lecturers.

Collaboration with lecturers can be improved by learning about the teaching techniques thus enabling librarians to work with the lecturers in the classroom. Then librarians are in a better position to approach the lecturers to introduce more collaborative activities.

In certain situations, lecturers and librarians, they themselves are unaware of benefits of the collaborative efforts. The successful stories of faculty-library collaborative practices should be disseminated not only in librarian forums but in other conferences, seminars, workshops to give an awareness of these programs to others. Lecturers must be invited to talk with librarians about teaching in their disciplines and get the support of the librarians (Fliss, 2005). To achieve a successful collaboration project, the enthusiasm to do it is not sufficient.

6. Conceptual model on faculty-library collaboration

The existing collaboration models were identified using the extensive literature survey. Attributes described in those models were compiled. Domain of the study was thoroughly explored by a comprehensive literature survey. The related documents, consisting of textbooks in library and information science, education and management sciences, research and academic articles, were evaluated, studied, analyzed and synthesized. This study used opinions of experts to find out more attributes on collaboration. All the selected attributes were categorized into main categories as shown in the Figure 1. This model will be refined with the support of data. Finally it is expected to validate the modified model in the view of introducing this to institutionalize the faculty-library collaboration.
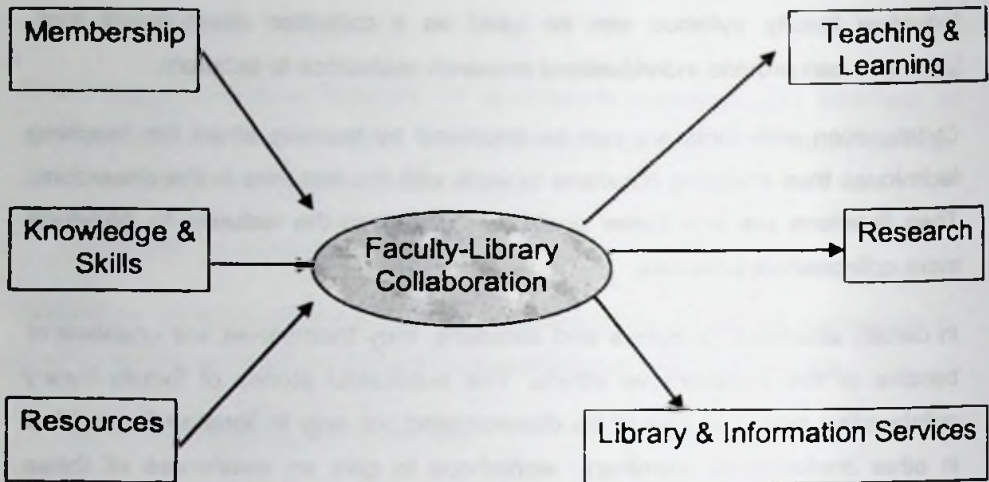
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┌──────────────┐                                          ┌──────────────┐
│ Membership   │─────┐                              ┌─────→│ Teaching &   │
└──────────────┘      ↘                            ↗       │ Learning     │
                       ↘                          ↗        └──────────────┘
┌──────────────┐         ⬭─────────────────⬭    ┌──────────────┐
│ Knowledge &  │───────→ │  Faculty-Library  │──────────────→ │ Research     │
│ Skills       │         │  Collaboration    │               └──────────────┘
└──────────────┘         ⬭─────────────────⬭
                       ↗                          ↘
┌──────────────┐      ↗                            ↘       ┌─────────────────────────────┐
│ Resources    │─────┘                              └─────→│ Library & Information Services│
└──────────────┘                                          └─────────────────────────────┘
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Fig.1 Conceptual model on faculty-library collaboration

7. Conclusion

Collaboration will be the next great transition in higher education. Faculty-library collaboration is an opportunity for lecturers and librarians to be contributors of this transition. As librarians, we have a choice about how we will respond to it. We can either participate and experience new and life- enhancing possibilities or we can let others define who and what we will become!

Acknowledgements

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LEARNER CENTRIC - OUTREACH SERVICES FOR DISTANCE LEARNERS: OPEN UNIVERSITY OF SRI LANKA

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Abstract

Providing new library services to distance learners is a challenge. However, introduction of new services add strength to the library user community. The OUSL library started new outreach services to its distance users. This paper discusses how some new services and resources were implemented, who the beneficiaries are, how to access and what sort of information is provided. These services are two folded; web based and onsite. Digitized Question Paper Archive is the most significant to users. The paper further discusses about the Curriculum Information Support Service that was aimed at the academic staff. Inquiry service is the most prominent service that is used by many academic staff members to find research articles. Further, a newly started project, E-abstracts of postgraduate theses and OUSL Journal is also popular among students. In addition, the on-site academic presentation practice facility provided for students is another new service given to OUSL learners.

Key words: Distance education and support services, distance learning, web based services, online support services, virtual information services, Sri Lanka

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